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Hurling a Durian

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SALLY WEN MAO

HURLING A DURIAN

This is the fantasy fruit: it can awaken
desires lodged deep inside a person

but stuck, like an almond clogging
the windpipe. The smell of a durian

may erase a child's immediate memories.
So I am addicted, of course. Not to eating

but to sniffing it like glue, my fingers probing
its dry, spiked surface until they bleed

and I eat. But the feast disappoints
me because its taste replaces the corpse

scent with something sweet and eggy,
a benign tang I flush down with wasabi.

For there is nothing much a kid like me
can do except awaken to loss and wish

for a seven-piece suit of armor. The desire
always returns: durian as a weapon of truth.

Even if I don't know how to pull a trigger
or whet a knife, it's tempting to imagine

throwing a dangerous fruit at the head
of the person who has failed you, hurt you,

and for all these years, tried to break
you. But this desire is lodged deep

for a reason: the pull of forgiveness
like a hopeless gravity, and always, I try

to resist. So I do by taking a spoonful
to my lips, savoring the smear, the din

of my cleaver hacking the husk, the juice,
the sweat ripping open the rind.